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**COMMERCE AWARDS \$1.2 MILLION RECOVERY ACT GRANT TO EXPAND
BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS IN RHODE ISLAND**

WASHINGTON – The Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today announced a \$1.2 million Recovery Act that will expand broadband Internet access at Rhode Island’s 71 public libraries across the state. Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, NTIA’s Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) provides grants to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas, enhance and expand public computer centers, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. These investments will help bridge the technological divide, boost economic growth and create jobs.

“Access to high-speed Internet is critical for students, job-seekers and entrepreneurs. By expanding the capacity for free access and training at local libraries, this grant will open up more opportunities for Rhode Islanders to participate in distance learning, online training and other online applications,” said **Lawrence E. Strickling**, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and Administrator of NTIA.

The grant will go to OSHEAN Inc., a consortium of not-for-profit organizations, which will use the funding to replace 327 existing computers and add more than 403 new workstations in Rhode Island libraries. The expanded capacity is expected to allow the libraries to serve more than 6,900 additional users per week.

“This Recovery Act funding will help more Rhode Island libraries upgrade their technology, expand computer training programs, and provide internet access for the public,” said **Senator Jack Reed**. “This funding comes as libraries are playing an increasingly important role in our communities by offering such assistance as help with writing resumes and searching and applying for jobs online.”

“The computers and broadband internet access provided by this \$1.245 million economic recovery grant will offer underserved communities around the state invaluable access and training to assist Rhode Islanders with everything from job searches to educational enrichment. This investment will expand opportunities and help move our libraries and our workforce into the 21st Century,” said **Senator Sheldon Whitehouse**.

“In our modern economy, computer literacy and internet access are critical to every member of Rhode Island’s workforce. By connecting small businesses and individuals alike, the internet is a critical driver of innovation, job creation, and workforce productivity. These funds will create

greater opportunities for all Rhode Islanders and position the State to compete more effectively for years to come,” said **Representative Patrick Kennedy**.

“Expanding free access to upgraded technology is so important for growing the economy of our state,” said **Representative Jim Langevin**. “The funding comes at a critical point, as people as people look for employment, explore small business opportunities and work to increase their skills. I look forward to following the progress of this project with OSHEAN.”

This project will also:

- Create 10 mobile computer centers, which will be used to bring computer training and access into underserved and rural communities with high rates of unemployment.
- Expand statewide computer training programs with streaming video to other libraries and offer technology classes taught in multiple languages, including Spanish.
- Provide targeted training and computer access opportunities for children, underprivileged high-school students, adults, and limited English-speaking populations.
- Expand access to educational programs offered by the University of Rhode Island, the Pell Marine Science Library, and community colleges.

NTIA received more than 1,800 applications during the first BTOP funding round and is currently awarding grants on a rolling basis. Including today’s announcement, NTIA has now awarded 17 grants totaling more than \$200 million under the program. A second round of BTOP applications will be accepted through March 15, 2010. In addition, NTIA has awarded \$97 million in mapping and planning grants to 51 states and territories.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a total of \$7.2 billion to NTIA and RUS to fund projects that will expand access to and adoption of broadband services. Of that funding, NTIA will utilize \$4.7 billion for grants to deploy broadband infrastructure, expand public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. RUS will use \$2.5 billion in budget authority to support grants and loans to facilitate broadband deployment in primarily rural communities. NTIA plans to announce all grant awards by September 30, 2010.

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U.S. Department of Commerce's NTIA serves as the executive branch agency principally responsible for advising the President on communications and information policy. For further information about NTIA's BTOP grants, please visit <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants/>.